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Sea

Santa Cruise 16



BROWSING AROUND SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

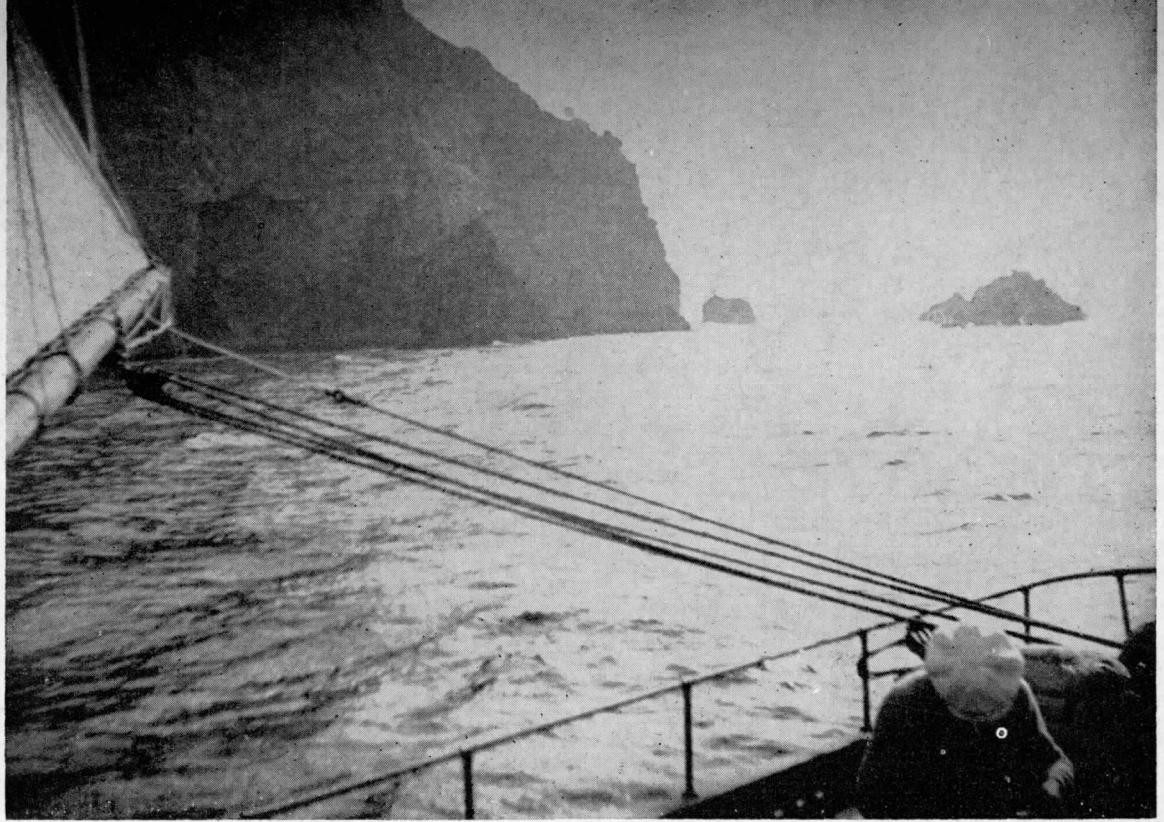
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A fascinating pastime is coasting along the rugged shores of Santa Cruz Island, when the fantastic shapes and soft coloring of the formations can be thoroughly enjoyed.

BROWSING AROUND SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

By ARTHUR R. SANGER

THIS is the largest, most precipitous, rugged and abnormal of all the Channel Islands. It is approximately 24 miles long and 12 miles at its widest part and lies 23 miles South of Santa Barbara. It was formerly the property of the Caire family of San Francisco. Now the eastern portion is owned by Ambrose Gherini and the rest by E. L. Stanton.

It is almost impossible to secure permission to land, because of the many depredations caused by thoughtless or callous people.

If your boat is fast you can easily make it in 24 hours from San Pedro, but if you have a slow windjammer, you can break the trip by spending the first night at Dume Cove.

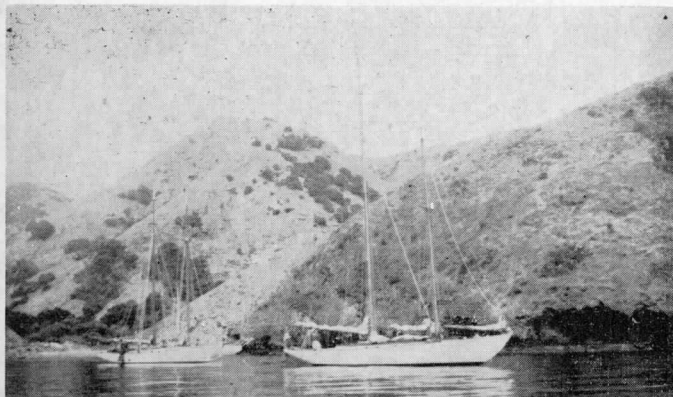
As you approach Santa Cruz Island from the direction of Catalina Island you will see a large mountain near its eastern end. Steer toward this and you will pass Anacapa Island on your starboard hand. This course will take you directly into Smugglers' Cove, which is large and fairly well protected from the

westerlies. However, the ground swells are sometimes heavy and this makes it unsafe to land, excepting along the edge of the rocky point on the South side. This is also the most protected part of the cove to anchor, but do not drop your hook too close to the beach, for sometimes the swells start to break some distance out, especially at low tide.

In the early days there was a small hot air engine at the edge of the trees you can see just behind the cove. The Caires had brought it from Italy. All they had to do was to burn a few dried leaves and sticks in the firebox and the heat would run the engine. This is a lovely spot, but don't try to land opposite the trees unless you are in a bathing suit.

As you leave Smugglers' early the next morning, I shall try to describe the various anchorages and points of interest as you cruise westward along the island's North shore. Most of the bays here are safe to go ashore in, as there is generally only a gentle ground swell.

Art Sanger's Dreamer (left) and the schooner Water Wagon anchored at Fry's, which is the writer's favorite harbor on Santa Cruz Island. Water Wagon is now the sloop Alatola, owned by Charles Frisbie of Seattle.



In the old days the fishing used to be impossibly good along the coast of Santa Cruz Island.

First you will round Point San Pedro, where you may catch some fine calico bass near the kelp beds. Then you will come to several rocks and reefs. There is an anchorage behind these, but it is not safe for a novice, so keep well out. A little farther along you will reach Scorpion Bay, where the Gherini ranch house is situated. This family owns the eastern part of the island.

If you anchor here you should have fairly heavy ground tackle, as the holding ground is poor and there will be some dangerous reefs just astern. Next around Cavern Point you will arrive at Tyler's Bay, surrounded by high cliffs. This anchorage is good only in a southeaster.

From here set your course for Prisoners' Harbor. On arrival pass the end of the wharf and cast your anchor at the western edge of the bay, where the water is deep close to the rocks. But do not anchor closer than about 200 feet, because the seas are likely to break pretty far out in rough weather. This harbor is not pleasant if a strong westerly is blowing, for the wind and waves come around the point in the late afternoon, causing your boat to do some fancy acrobatics. After you have put out lots of scope you can row ashore, but only if you have already secured permission in writing, and you would have to be a magician to secure that. To reach the large ranch of Ed Stanton you follow Portesuelo Creek inland for about a mile and a half.

Here in the early days the Caires developed a beautiful Shangri-la surrounded by high mountains. They were entirely self-supporting and even had one of the finest wineries in California.

From this valley West to Pelican Bay there is a forest of pine, oak and ironwood trees. Some of the pines are as tall as 100 feet. This is the only place on any of the islands where large trees grow wild. There are also many ferns, wild flowers and shrubs. They are made possible by the high mountains behind the valley. This is the eastern edge of our imaginary river of wind, as explained in the February issue of SEA. This wind strikes the high peaks and condenses, causing more fog and rain in this section.

This was one of the large settlements of the original Indians. Later the early Californians had a penal colony here. The

prisoners (so the story goes) were given pigs, seeds and cattle, then left to themselves. Finally they escaped to the mainland, leaving some of the pigs, which reverted to the wild state. There are many large boars on the island to this day. There are also many small foxes, similar to our desert fox. You will see a variety of birds—jays, mocking birds, warblers, linnets, gulls, cormorants, pelicans and big baldheaded eagles. The oyster catcher, a large black shore bird with a reddish yellow beak, can sometimes be seen. I don't think he is seen much farther South than this. There is also a wicked-looking black murderer called a raven. I could tell you many stories of this bird's savagery.

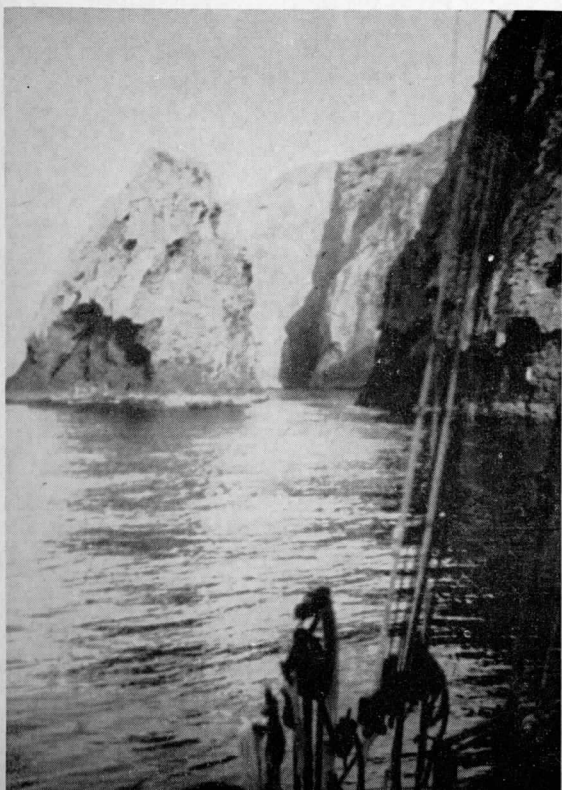
Leaving Prisoners' Harbor you will come to Pelican Bay, about two miles farther West. Crossing its mouth, you should anchor on the West side, in order to avoid the ground swell as much as possible. The water is quite deep up to the rocky wall, so you should have plenty of scope.

At one time Ira Eaton operated a tourist camp here, bringing his passengers from Santa Barbara on his boat, the *Sea Wolf*.

About a mile West of Pelican are Tinkers' Harbor and Platt's Harbor, both small and to my thinking not not so good. There are rocks along here you should look out for. I never cared for these harbors, because just a mile and a half farther along is Fry's Harbor. I consider this the best close-in anchorage on the island. It is best to anchor on the West side near the cliffs. Put a heavy anchor out forward, then take one up on the beach for the stern. You are now on the West side of our imaginary stream of wind that roars down from Point Conception, so it is liable to blow all night. But your stern line will keep you from swinging around, and no matter how hard it may blow from the West or northwest, it will be flat in the harbor where you are, with only a gentle ground swell. There is a nice beach here and a canyon with water and trees almost at hand.

I remember we were anchored here one early morning in June, 1925, when suddenly there was a fearful roar and crashing sound. As I lay in my bunk, I thought at first that some big steamer had come into the bay and run against the cliffs. When the *Dreamer* began to tremble and shake, I ran up on deck.

(Continued on Page 45)



The ocean is constantly gnawing at Santa Cruz Island. The pinnacle at the left has been separated from the island by this action. Other effects of it can be plainly seen.

You can't catch lobsters as big as these any more. At one time they were commonplace at Santa Cruz Island, if you knew where to look!



wasted money, manpower and time! True, a shipper can employ the services of a "Broker" for \$15 to \$30, which I understand is now compulsory at Los Angeles, but that is only a further step toward the La Paz type of "knifing." When, oh when, will southern yachtsmen be accorded the same simplicity of "clearing customs" that prevails in the Northwest for boats entering and returning from Canadian waters? We have been across the northern and southern borders of the United States many times in the *Monsoon* or other boats of ours and cannot help but wonder why we continue to be herded around as we are when visiting our friends to the South who, theoretically, at least, are no more an enemy of ours than are Canadians to the North.

The trip from San Diego to Wilmington was interrupted by an overnight stop at Catalina, all of us not the least anxious to conclude the voyage and inwardly hoping we could extend it awhile longer. Weather was perfect on this leg of the trip, but by early morning the storm that raged for a week in mid-January had churned the channel into boisterous turmoil. The trip across from the Island was as rough as we had seen in years—but could not daunt the enthusiasm and pleasant recollections of over five weeks of cruising "Down Mexico Way."

BROWSING AROUND SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

(Continued from Page 17)

Immediately I saw some large rocks falling down the mountain-sides and the entire island was quivering.

Then I realized that it was a bad earthquake. I ran and cast off the stern line, allowing the *Dreamer* to drift further out into the bay. We turned on the radio, and after another severe quake we began to get news of the disaster that had come to Santa Barbara.

A couple of years before that we walked to the top of Mount Diablo, behind Fry's (2400 feet). We climbed through thick fog until within about 200 feet of the summit. Then we emerged into bright sunlight and could look out over an ocean of fog below us. About this time the total eclipse of the sun began, a weird sight under the circumstances. Al Sumner, Don West and myself had some dark-colored glass, and when the eclipse was total we could see the great columns of colored flames they call solar prominences shooting high up from the edge of the sun. At this moment we could also see the mainland from Point Conception to Malibu, but at the end of the eclipse we could not see any land. Judge Arnold Praeger stayed on the *Dreamer*. He told us that as the darkness spread the birds all went to roost, but near the end they were once more singing and flying about.

From Point Diablo to the westward you must expect to encounter strong winds and heavy seas, especially in the afternoon. So I will again say that if you wish to cruise close in to admire the cliffs and the coloring, travel in the early morning and be safely anchored by 2:00 P. M. There is an abundance of fish, abalones and lobsters along these shores, but you have to hunt for them.

From Fry's Harbor, which I always left with regret, you go West along a more dangerous coast. Rounding a high point with its imposing cliffs, you turn South into a large bight. On its easterly side is Ladies' Harbor, in the center Valdez and to the westward Ganado. These three anchorages are safe unless there is a strong westerly; then they are disagreeable. Let out plenty of scope and hope that your anchor is heavy enough.

There used to be plenty of wild boars in this part of the island, and among the cliffs you will see thousands of cormo-

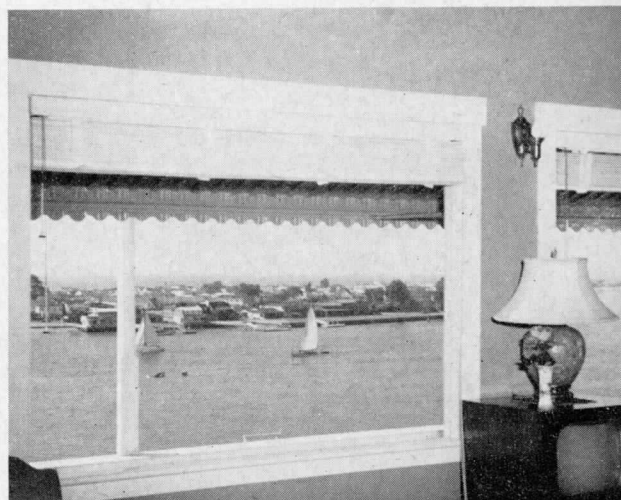


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rants and gulls, while the lichen makes beautiful colored patterns everywhere.

Continuing West, you next come to the great Painted Cave. It is generally rough and the water is very deep in front of the cave, so you should have somebody stay aboard while you enter in the dinghy. If your boat is small, however, and you enter in the morning, which is the calmest and safest time, you can anchor in the mouth of the cave.

I have been in the cave eight times. To show my friends the beautiful coloring, I would take an auto battery and searchlight along, because in the rear of the cave all you can see is blackness without a powerful light. The walls are about 100 feet high as you enter, but slope to about 20 feet at the rear. It extends straight back for some 200 feet to a solid wall. Here it makes a right-angled turn. About 20 feet beyond the turn you will be in inky blackness. If you strike a match you will see only about a foot of your boat. This is when your more powerful light will be needed. Rowing cautiously (which you will do never fear), you can go another 150 feet or so. There are grey seals, small octopi, and somewhere in the distant reaches of the cavern the ground swells compress the air and water against the roof, making a rumbling noise like distant thunder. The whole place vibrates and trembles, giving you a weird, creepy feeling.

I entered the cave first in 1910. We went about 250 feet and I thought some part of it went through to a cove further on. But on my last trip we could go only about 150 feet beyond the turn. I had the impression that the roof had caved in, but it may have been only that the tide was higher. I could not tell.

Now, if you want to give your guests a thrill, go in as far as you can, turn your lights out and ask them to imagine what would happen if the roof should cave in. As the boat slides off the rocky edges at the side of the cave in a receding swell, ask them how far they could swim in that complete blackness if the boat should capsize. They will also wonder if the seals, which will be making a tremendous din, would take a hunk out of a leg, and there could be a large octopus which might grab one and pull him down into the cold blackness. These and like imaginings will soon bring requests from your guests to hit for daylight, and boy! do you all feel happy (taxes and all included) when you emerge with those terrors astern!

Do not try to go into the cave if the tide is high and the ground swells are big. They could smash you against the roof, with what dire consequences you can easily imagine.

About half way between the Painted Cave and the end of the island we uncovered one time a lovely little bay almost invisible between the high cliffs. It was one of those calm and quiet days you seldom know in that region. There were ten of us aboard, including Mr. and Mrs. Harry Montague and Bob Reynolds. Placing a 175-lb. anchor at the end of about 200 feet of heavy chain out forward, and tying a 1½-inch line to some rocks astern, we called the place "Paradise Cove." There were hundreds of abalones, lobsters and calico bass all around the shores and a large cave in the cliffs to the westward, in which Indians had once lived.

That night the wind came up and kept growing stronger every hour. There is a peculiar formation around that bay. The cliffs around the West side are about 100 feet high, and from the top of these the land slopes to the westward for about half a mile. The wind from the West slides up this incline and is increasingly compressed near the top. When it reached the edge it dropped down on the *Dreamer* like a ton of bricks, carrying pebbles, sand and spray. We were all below and it was very dark outside. Mrs. Montague went on deck and suddenly

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shouted that we were alongside the cliffs. We all rushed out and sure enough the schooner was so close we shoved her away with our hands. We had been lying right against that wall in all that wind and never scratched the paint on the topside. It was blowing the life preservers, cushions and all loose gear overboard. That 1½-inch line had parted, allowing us to swing around. We lowered the port boat and put 100 feet of new line into it, retaining the rest on board. Then Montague, who weighed 200 pounds and was an excellent oarsman, started to row toward the rocks where our line had been fast. He only had gone about 50 feet when a gust of wind swept him toward the open sea in spite of his exertions. If it had not been for the line I was paying out, he would have gone off on a solitary cruise down the channel. After several attempts, we finally carried the rope around the shore, made it fast and followed it back to the *Dreamer*. It took all ten of us half an hour to pull her back to her anchorage against that wind.

Looking out beyond the cliffs at the raging white seas, it took me back to the year 1903, when I drifted down the Colorado River with two friends from Lee's Ferry to Yuma. Through the gorges we could see the terrible white rapids at night when we were camped near the bank of the river.

That was the most anxious night I ever spent on the *Dreamer*. When morning came at last we got our anchor up in a hurry and beat it from that bay, renaming it "Hell's Hole." If you ever go in there, take my advice and leave before dark.

When you round West Point turn toward Fraser Point along a coast that is precipitous and the most dangerous part of the island. Below Fraser Point you will find Forney's Cove. It is East of the line of reefs. Turn around the South end of these and come to behind them. This anchorage is safe at low tide when no strong wind is blowing. This is a good place to hunt for curios, but leave before the wind gets too strong. I consider all anchorages near the West end unsafe for an overnight stay.

Continuing around the South side of the island, you pass Gull Island, covered with birds. In the kelp which surrounds it there are many fish. There are several anchorages along this coast but they are not safe until you reach Cochies Prietos. This little bay is all right in the absence of heavy ground swells; in fact, all the anchorages on the West and South coasts are dangerous when these rollers are present. It is difficult to land in them and not much to see if you do.

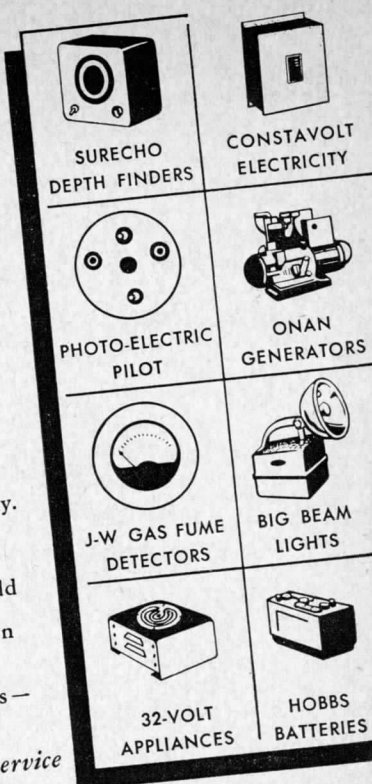
I must again say that I am writing about the time of year between June 15th and September 15th. Any other time the wind may come from the southeast or northeast, or wicked

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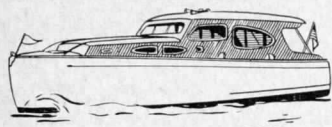


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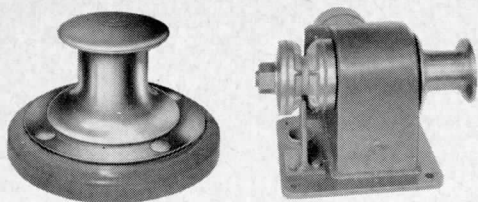
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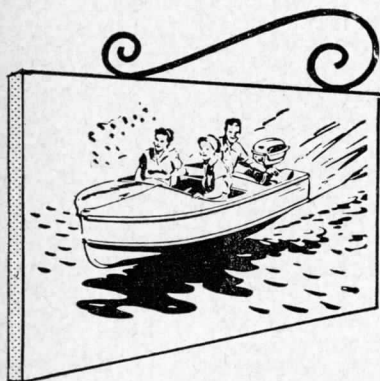
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seas may roll in. Then most of the anchorages on the Channel Islands are far from happy places.

It is wise to stay away from the channel between Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa in the afternoon and evening. I was caught there once by the sudden wind funneling through and it was a terrible experience. The current often runs against the wind, causing a formidable rip.

Cruising among these outer islands was the sport I enjoyed most—the feeling of being on your own and winning out against the savage elements. I cannot help bragging a little, for in all the 36 years I owned the *Dreamer* we did not have a single accident and never had a tow rope aboard.

NEWPORT NEWS

(Continued from Page 19)

new sails! She is being readied for another crack at the Trans-Pacific Record and this time will be under ketch (almost a yawl) rig.

On March 9th NHYC will defend its prized San Diego Lipton Trophy with *Escapade* against all comers headed by challenger *Antigua* of Voyagers Yacht Club. This event always draws a large crowd of spectators as the racing is really for keeps. Jack Toon has been elected Captain of the Balboa PC Fleet for 1952. Bill Ficker sailed ex-champ Darby Metcalf's *Bucket* to two 1sts in the last of the five races to overcome a tie with Warren Blinn and walk off with the Inslee Trophy. Bill is the former collegiate dinghy champion and his battles with Manning Series winner Blinn and the 12-boat Lehman Fleet are worth seeing. As a trend in 1952 Newport events it was noted that several boats were disqualified for not filing entry blanks and several others in the series since Christmas have dropped out of races after committing fouls.

One of the strangest sights in a decade was the famous South Coast tug *Walrus* under the capable hand of Lou Dixon towing a completely submerged 30-foot cruiser through the Manning dinghy traffic. The cruiser *Sea Lad* had sunk at her mooring after shipping water through open scuppers erroneously put right at the water line in her transom. The high winds blew the water in and the boat sank until her empty fuel tanks just balanced the weight! Newport salts will find themselves well represented on the 1952 Newport Chamber of Commerce with the hard working Harvey Somers elected President and the well known skippers Dr. Suess and Ted Hambrook on the Board. One of their first acts was to present the Helms Athletic Foundation Award for 1952 to Jim Webster for his long and active interest in Newport Yachting. Bob Boyd was given the

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